

The revolutionary Marxist movement in the U.S. has maintained an organizational continuity for over 50 years in the form of the S.W.P. Why was this continuity able to be maintained, in the richest and most conservative country in the world? Well, for one thing, the human material was of pretty high quality, and that is the subject of this presentation. Who were the founding cadre of our movement, and what prepared them?

"The revolutionary party is a bridge in historic consciousness. It absorbs the lessons of the class struggle, victories as well as defeats, preserving them as part of its revolutionary heritage.

The party's cadres are the mechanism through which this 'class memory is infused into labor struggles on the given contemporary scene."

From Teamster Rebellion, Farrell Dobbs.

Viewed from this vantage, working class history can be seen, correctly, as something that must be assimilated by a revolutionary party. The past is the soil we grew out of, and no understanding of where we are going is complete without knowing where we came from.

The expansion of our knowledge of the working class militants who *were inspired by the* assimilated the lessons of the Russian Revolution and fought to build a party of the Bolshevik type in the United States should be of intense

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We can learn something from studying their collective activity and their personal lives, and the interrelation between them,

Learning about working class history, and the history of our own party, then, should be seen as a party building activity, and not as an avocation pursued by specialists.

Political program is not self evident, nor the result of revelations. Farrell Dobbs says in "Revolutionary Continuity" that "the Marxist program is simply the generalization of the strategic lessons learned by succeeding generations over the course of the class struggle."

It follows from this that without history there is no program.

We have learned that a revolutionary party has to be working class in composition, as well as having a political program that expresses the historical needs and aspirations of the working class.

The decisive founding cadre of our party were seasoned working class militants. Cannon, V.R. Dunne, Carl Skoglund, Arne Swabeck, and others, were working class in social origin. They were able to construct a party that relied more directly for political leadership on proletarian fighters than the Socialist party and the Communist party had. In fact, this had been a primary goal that they had been fighting for in factional formation in the C.P. The founders of our party had been almost all members of the Foster Cannon faction, and then the Cannon faction in the C.P. in the 20's.

"The fact that our party was able to construct a ^{proletarian} leadership ~~of this type~~ was a significant advance, and part of the explanation for our continuity and strength through decades of unfavorable circumstances.

Carl Skoglund played a central role in the construction of this proletarian leadership team.

In our opinion, he, along with James P Cannon, formed an indispensable link in the chain of revolutionary continuity.

When Cannon Schaetman and Abern were expelled from the C.P. national leadership in 1928, they weren't just generals without an army, as they were derisively called. They were the nucleus of a workers party, especially because the 21 Communists expelled in Minneapolis, with their deep roots in the labor and radical movements, stepped forward.

Skoglund was the key person in assembling ^{AND EDUCATING} a revolutionary working class cadre, with years of common experience and mutual confidence welding them together. This was what became the Minneapolis branch of the S.W.P., which was the fortress of our movement in the dog days of the early 30's, and which went on to lead the great Minneapolis Teamster strikes in 1934.

When Trotsky said that in the last analysis all the problems of humanity will be solved on American soil, he did not add, and only by workers born here.

Carl Skoglund. like millions of American workers then and now, was born somewhere else. In fact, he lived in this country for 50 years, and never became a citizen.

Skoglund arrived in the United States from Sweden on May 8, 1911, landing at Boston, Mass. Three days later he was in Minneapolis, one of the great centers of Scandinavian immigration.

Minneapolis was a great regional center for itinerant workers - lumberjacks, harvest hands, railroad laborers, and others. The I.W.W. had its headquarters for its "Agricultural Workers Union" in Minneapolis.

Skoglund worked first as a building laborer, being laid off in the winter, and in Sept 1913 went to Northern Minnesota to work as a lumberjack.

His foot was crushed in an industrial accident, and as a result he was unable to work for an extended period. He made use of this time by packing a lunch and spending eight hours a day in the Minneapolis Public Library.

About a block from the boarding house he lived in there was a public park where the radicals and religious speakers hung out, including many Swedes. There, he said, he had an opportunity to voice his opinions and discuss socialism and many other related subjects.

"I stayed in that park practically all the time I had to spare, for one whole summer. The park became a debating ground for various views."

In that period, in late 1914 or early 1915, he joined the Scandinavian

Socialist
Federation

affiliated with the American Socialist party.

He said, "The Socialist party was a conglomeration of many different viewpoints. In the Scandinavian branch of which I was a member, there was represented all sorts of views - The DeLeonists, IWW, ultra-reformist social democrats, left social democratic positions - these were centrists, a heritage from the old country. The left wing, the revolutionary position, was crystalized mainly through the Russian revolution."

The American S.P. had 120,000 members by 1912. The immigrant workers formed socialist groups based on their own languages and nationalities and initially had little or nothing to do with the S.P.

But by 1906 the Finnish socialists had worked out an arrangement with the S.P. where they maintained a translator in the National Office in Chicago who translated party documents, bulletins and propaganda into Finnish.

In 1910 the S.P. decided that foreign language federations with 500 or more members could affiliate with the party by establishing a translator in the N.O. The first to do so, in 1911, were the South Slavs, the Italians and the Scandinavians.

In 1911 the S.S.F. bought a newspaper published in Rockford, Ill., the Svenska Socialisten, and moved it to Chicago and established it as the

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national organ of the S.S.F.

Beginning in 1916, reports from Minneapolis written by Carl Skoglund
began to appear in Svenska Socialisten.

Until these writings were re-discovered, there was virtually nothing ^{written}
by Carl Skoglund.

Just one letter to the Militant in 1929.

From Svenska Socialisten we find out that Skoglund was a central leader of the S.S.F. in Minnesota, elected State Chairman in 1917. The S.S.F. had 3700 members nationally in 1917, and had 13 branches in Minnesota.

The Swedes were the 5th largest foreign language group in the U.S. in 1920, [overwhelmingly concentrated in a few areas, ^{U.S.} Minneapolis being one of the most important ^{centers}]. They were a very large factor in working class politics, and politics in general in Minnesota.

From the writings we also get a closeup picture of a revolutionary worker, operating in a loose social democratic organization, instinctively trying to find a way to a disciplined combat party.

We also see where some of the rich experience on how to function as a mass organization that is part of our continuity is derived from.

Skoglund had a lively sense of humor, demonstrated in these articles.

The function of the articles was to report on the activities of the Minneapolis locals of the S.S.F., and he deliberately wrote them in a humorous vein, while consistently injecting political thought into them.

I want to try to give a flavor of this.

Many of his contributions were titled Kvarnstad Krönika, or Mill City Chronicle, after the popular designation of Minneapolis. In the S.S. of August 13, 1916, he reports that he has been named correspondent for Minneapolis. This, he says, is a powerful job, with great influence. He says he intends to continue with it until the foreseeable future - which means "until I get tired of it."

The socialists ~~used to~~ organized a lot of activities that were part social, part political, that could involve the large numbers of ^{workers} ~~worker~~ who supported the movement.

Skoglund reports on one such picnic, which was held in Glenwood park in Minneapolis. "Many socialists attended", he says. "Everything was denounced, everything was photographed and everything was declaimed."

He then adds "etc., etc., etc.", in both Latin and Swedish.

He reports an upcoming party being organized in conjunction with the 1st District (Minn.) Congress. He says: "Guests are asked to surprise the party committee by being here on time."

He is very attentive to circulation of the press. His name turns up periodically in the SS, listed with other active subscription getters.

In the next issue he reports on the 1st District meeting. One comrade who spoke, C.J. Carlson, Skoglund says " is the enemy of long speeches, especially at meetings such as this. This enmity", he syas, " is healthy for the movement."

He felt quite strongly about this. In another issue he had a little comment headed "Father, Forgive Them, For They Know not What They Do"

"This statement", he ~~says~~, " is for those who have such a microscopic brain that they can't keep quiet during the program, but have to whisper, giggle and bother those who want to listen."

"I have never felt the need to pray to 'our father' or any other father, but I would pray to all the powers of Heaven and Hell to keep from being so childishly silly that I couldn't hold my own during a half hour speech."

The Swedish workers movement was quite concerned with the intellectual development of its members, as well as politics. Cultural activities formed an important part of the life of the movement.

Skoglund says "After the District meeting, those people who were highly gifted with uncommon foresight and colossal intelligence took my advice and visited an art gallery where a special Swedish exhibit can

be seen."

Later that evening, he says, they had a boat excursion on Lake Minnetonka

Haggerty
He describes a young member, who, he says " kept our laughing muscles tight.

He declaimed, gesticulated, and looked through the binoculars for the
great Lake Monster, of American size."

He then describes his singing. "And his skin was pulled back and his
face opened up to sound and unsound - and the prop ellor stopped and turned
the other way, and the fish lost the coloring in their faces."

The Scandinavian socialists organized periodic propaganda drives
they called Agitation Weeks, where they brought in outstanding national
speakers and distributed literature and sold subscriptions.

District
The Congress discussed the possibility of establishing Socialist Sunday
schools, and elected a District Steering Committee.

In the Nov 9, 1916, S.S., Skoglund wrote a short essay on what he
felt were the most important attributes an active socialist should have.

A few excerpts: "You socialists who read these words, to you I'd like
to say; that in case you're not already basically at home in the principles

and theories of socialism, take the time now to seriously study the philosophy of socialism, as well as its economic basis, not so much for your own sakes, as so that you can explain in a clear and easy way to your friends and acquaintances what the goals of our movement are, as well as the reason we have put ourselves in the struggle for freedom.

|| Now is the right time to prepare yourselves to explain to your co-workers what is meant by the materialist conception of history, the theory of labor value and the reason for the class struggle, goals and end results, because it is on these that the entire philosophy of socialism rests. My firm conviction is that only those who are willing to spread knowledge of the principles of socialism in wider circles are of any real value to the movement."

" That man or woman who sells a socialist book or pamphlet or gets a subscription to our paper does more for our movement than the one who votes our ticket from top to bottom."

"Agitation and propaganda on social questions is the main thing, and in this work young and old, men and women, voters and non-voters alike can all participate."

In S.S., April 4, 1917, Skoglund describes a trip to Chicago for a national Congress of the Federation. Again, he writes with humor. "On our arrival in Chicago, " he says, " we were not met, as we had expected, by the Mayor , followed by a band playing the "International." Instead we were greeted without ceremony by several comrades."

Svenska Socialisten Sept 20, 1917, reports that the First District Convention of the S.S.F. held in Duluth, elected Carl Skoglund Chairman of the State Steering Committee, and C.R. Carlgren, secretary.

The convention also voted to send a letter, signed by Skoglund and Carlgren, protesting an attack on democratic rights by the governor of Minnesota, which we found in the Sept. 1, 1917, issue of the Mpls New Times an English language left wing socialist weekly.

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~~As early as 1911, the New Times printed the reply of the Bolsheviks to~~

~~Vanderheld, the head of the Socialist International, explaining their~~

~~revolutionary defeatist position on the war~~

One week before the U.S. declared war, the Minnesota legislature established the Public Safety Commission, with dicatorial powers, and unleashed a ferocious witchhunt against opponents of the war, socialists and Non Partisan Leaguers.

Under these conditions, a organization called the People's Council for Democracy and Peace, a national coalition of socialists and pacifists with a petty bourgeois peace program, planned a convention for Minneapolis in Sept 1917.

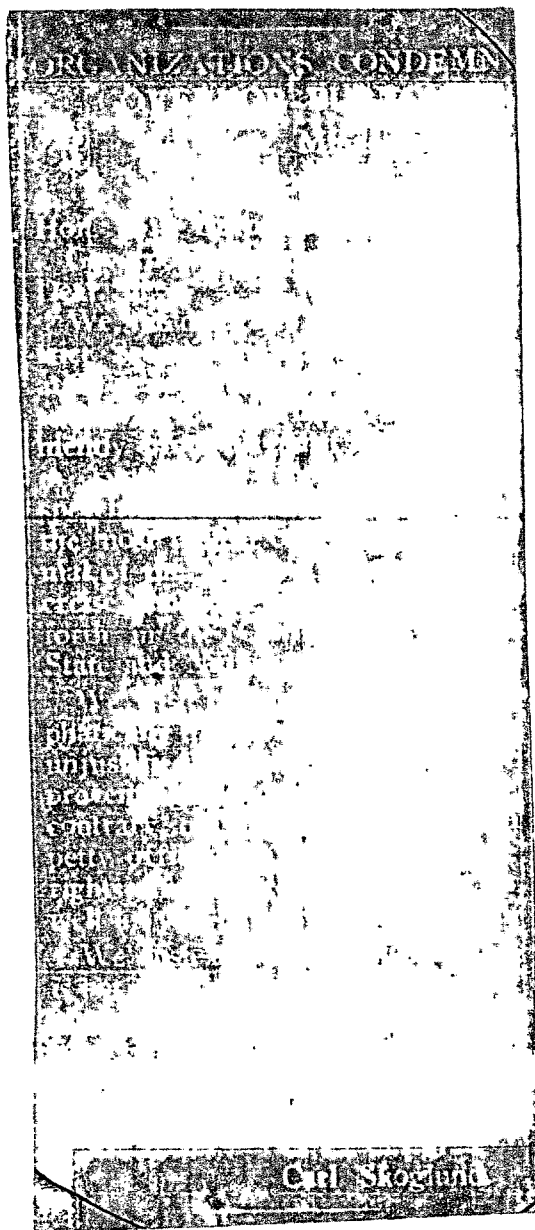
The meeting was banned by J.A.A. Burnquist, the governor of Minnesota.

Samule Gompers, head of the pre-war AFL, sent one of his flunkys to

Minneapolis to rent all available meeting halls, to preclude the possibility of the People's Council finding a meeting place.

Burnquist's attack on free speech and assembly drew a vigorous response from the socialist movement, including the Scandinavian Socialist Federation. (Read Skoglund- Carlgren letter)

MINNEAPOLIS NEW TIMES - Sept. 1, 1917



Svenska Socialisten October 10, 1917 reports on a debate to be held between Gustav Melgren and Carl Skoglund on the topic "Is there Salvation in Jesus, or should we save ourselves? "

In the Nov 29 issues of the same year there is an article by Skoglund called "A Sign of the Times" which takes up war and capitalism, and explains the origin of imperialist war in the capitalist economic system and the drive to find new markets.

At the end of the article he says "If the entire earth were one country and/ with one government, this wouldn't stop war and bloodbaths under capitalism. The only thing that can bring peace, happiness and well-being is socialism, where the workers receive full value for their work." He concludes, "Therefore, forward march for socialism, comrades."

Skoglund displayed an acute awareness throughout his life of the importance of drawing women into the workers movement. It was Skoglund who proposed the formation of a Women's Auxiliary in the 1934 Teamster strikes, so that they could play an active role in the strike, and not be left to stay at home, isolated from the struggle, which had lead to defeat in previous strikes.

S.S. of August 30, 1917 reports on a meeting organized by the Swedish socialist§ overwhelmingly male, to discuss what could be done to win women for socialism. It reports Comrade Skoglund spoke there and discussed how human beings evolved from lower to higher forms of life. Its likely he used Engels "Origin of the Family" as the basis for the discussion.

The reporter adds, "This is, of course, a break from the faith of the holy people, but in these days there are many such breaks."

The last writing by Carl Skoglund in Svenska Socialisten is in the May 2, 1918 issue. Unfortunately, the collection of S.S. we used has a gap from Sept 1918 to Feb 1920, with only a few issues from June 1919 in between. This is a critical period in the socialist movement, of course, and a period where Skoglund plays a leading role in the formation of the Communist party. It stands to reason that he would have written on this and commented on it but until we find the missing issues, we won't know.

In his last contributions to S.S. he reports on the organization of the election campaign for 1918- he was a member of the Hennenin County Central Committee of the S.P. - and the formation of a Tom Mooney Defense League, of which more later.

C.S. -8 a

In 1916 Skoglund was hired by the Pullman Company, the railroad passenger coach makers, who actually owned all the coaches in service, as a mechanic.

He worked in a railroad yard owned by the Chicago Greatwestern R.R. in Minneapolis, where the CGW's passenger cars were serviced.

The CGW was organized into craft unions, but the Pullman company had been non-union since the Pullman strike was crushed in 1894.

To get the job, he had to sign a "yellow-dog" contract, an agreement that as long as he worked for the company he would have nothing to do with any unions.

In this yard he met Oscar Coover, Sr., who was chief electrician for the CGW, and at that time a staunch supporter of Woodrow Wilson.

"He thought Wilson was a good liberal," Skoglund said. "He went for the slogan that the war was to make the world safe for democracy."

He said sometimes debates went on so long they hardly got any work done. Oscar Coover was won over, as we know, and was one of the pioneers of our movement, one of many recruited by Carl Skoglund.

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When the United States entered World war I in April 1917, the government took over the operation of the railroads. In order to keep things running smoothly, they recognized the existing rail craft unions, and did not oppose the organization of union in sections of the rail industry that were unorganized.

Under these circumstances, Skoglund, along with other workers, initiated the organization of the Pullman workers into Local 299 of the Railway Carmen of America. Skoglund was elected president of the local, which represented Pullman workers in Minneapolis and St. Paul.

He also participated in the strike of the Pullman workers in 1918 and 1919.

During this period Skoglund maintained activity in at least ^{FIVE} ~~four~~ areas.

He was a leading member of the Scandinavian Socialist Federation. He was a union activist- president of his local (a little later I will describe how he initiated the organization of the union at Pullman), he participated in united front activities such as defense committees with English speaking radicals, and he belonged to the I.W.W., which he joined, he said, in order to recruit to the Socialist party, since he did not agree with the I.W.W.'s anti-political syndicalist policies. Also Hennepin County Central Committee - S.P.

So as his activities are related, keep in mind that all this was going on simultaneously. A former comrade who served with him on the District Committee of the C.P. in the '20's said "Skogie was someone who had to give it everything."

During his activity among English speaking radicals he met a young Wobblie who had returned to Minneapolis after years of traveling around the country as a lumberjack and harvest hand, and engaging in the famous free speech fights of the I.W.W. in Seattle, San Diego and other cities. Skoglund had long debates with him over the importance of having a political party to fight for socialism, and the inadequacy of the I.W.W.'s syndicalist politics. This was V.R. Dunne, or Ray. Ray always said Carl

was his teacher. Farrell Dobbs says in "Teamster Rebellion" : "In a personal memorandum written to me long afterward, Ray spoke of their early association: 'Skogie, as he was affectionately called from the earliest days by his comrades and intimate friends, was my teacher and close comrade. He was not only a skilled mechanic, he was an intellectual of considerable stature. He had a fine library of Marxist literature, and in most of our spare time we were together.

I spent a good deal of time reading books and pamphlets in between short 'curtain lectures' from Carl. At times there would be six or eight other comrades with us in his room, or in the I.W.W. headquarters, or in the IOGT on the north side in the sawmill district, which was the headquarters of the largest S.P. local in Minneapolis or St. Paul. He explained the strong and the weak sides of the I.W.W. Even in those days (around 1915, D.R.) he was as much at home with the Webblies as he was in the Socialist party.

Both recognized him as a leader. But he was a party man, first and always an internationalist, of course."

Skoglund joined the I.W.W. in 1917. He told Halstead, "I went in to recruit them out of there, into the Socialist party and to show them they were wrong. This was all individual action, there being no discipline in the S.P. I was not in the I.W.W. as part of a Socialist party fraction; I just thought it was a good place to work."

A Swedish socialist named Walfrid Engdahl said in 1968 that after the editor of the Swedish language I.W.W. paper "Allarm" was arrested in the great roundup of I.W.W.'s in 1917, that the paper was carried on by a committee, including Engdahl and Carl Skoglund.

"allarm" should be gone through.

There was deep opposition to U.S. participation in World war I, especially among the working class and immigrant nationalities.

This was especially true in Minnesota. Many farmers, especially Scandinavian and German, were anti-war and supporters of the Non Partisan League, the militant farmers organization, which swept into office in North Dakota in 1916.

The Socialist party had 5,000 members in Minnesota. By the time the U.S. entered the war, there were 21 locals of the S.P. in Minneapolis.

The Minneapolis S.P. had a proletarian leadership. Most of the candidates for public office, party speakers and writers, were trade unionists.

The Minneapolis Trades and Labor Assembly, affiliated with the AFL, was lead by socialist, and published a dynamic, fighting weekly paper, the LABOR REVIEW.

In 1916 the S.P.'s candidate for Mayor of Minneapolis, Tom Van Lear, a railroad machinist, was elected to a two year term.

He remained a vocal opponent of the war throughout his term. A week after the U.S. declaration of war, Van Lear called a mass antiwar rally in the Minneapolis Auditorium, attended by over 10,000.

There were two weekly socialist papers published in Minneapolis, the New Times, in English, and a Norwegian language paper.

As early as 1914, the New Times printed a reply by the Bolsheviks to Vandeveld, the head of the Socialist International, explaining their revolutionary defeatist position on the war.

The Socialist party candidate for governor of Minnesota, Jacob Bentall (a member of the S.S.F.)

who ran in 1916 and 1918, was indicted under the Espionage act for remarks made in the course of a regular socialist speech. The prosecution claimed the speech "influenced drafted men and caused them to refuse military service."

Bentall was sentenced to two years in prison. Other S.P. ers, who refused military service, were sentenced to as much as 25 years.

Skoglund acted as Secretary of the J.O. Bentall defense committee.

He said: "We organized a big mass meeting and sold tickets for \$1.

We went to the Soo Line (Railroad) shopmen's union with a membership of about 1800. Motion from the floor was made that the union take out of the treasury \$ 1 for each member and present it to the defense committee. I received \$1800 from that meeting for his defense.."

"When Bentall was released from prison, we organized a reception for him. We went to the city council (at that time with eight socialist aldermen) and the city council voted to present him the key to the city.

"This was all arranged by the Scandinavian Federation. You can imagine

"what the papers had to say about that - 'The most shameful thing to ever take place in this city', etc. etc." *(also reported in Ny Tid - 1923)*

The frameup of Tom Mooney and Warren Billings, two radical labor activists in San Francisco, on charges of bombing a Preparedness Day parade (designed to mobilize popular support for the U.S. participation in WW I) was the central labor defense case in this period. Eight people were killed in the bombing and Mooney and Billings were sentenced to death, on the basis of perjured testimony.

We were able to get an unusual insight into the activities of the Mooney activists in Minneapolis due to the discovery of a series of reports by operatives of a private detective agency who had infiltrated the Mooney Defense League and the IWW.

The spy in the Mooney defense committee managed to get ahold of the minutes and sent them into his employer. The minutes of Nov 28, 1918 report that Skoglund and I.G. Scott, a left wing socialist, trade unionist and city councilman, were elected to a committee to visit the Molder Union and to urge them to take action in the Mooney case.

On Dec. 1, a Mooney mass meeting was held at the Labor Temple, called by the Mpls. Trades and Labor Assembly, with 800 workers in attendance and

several hundred more in an overflow meeting in the Milk Drivers Hall.

This was evidently considered an important meeting. There are reports of the same meeting by three different spies on file.

One of them reports "Mayor Van Lear spoke and made a very lengthy talk and undertook to show the laboring man how the capitalist class was grinding him down deeper into the mud all the time. The Mayor also spoke of the attempted Red Flag demonstration Sunday, Nov 24. He accused the home guard of breaking up a peaceful assemblage of American citizens.

Skoglund participated in this demonstration, which was called by the Socialist party. *TO DEMAND 10 U.S. TROOPS TO BE USED AGAINST WORKERS REVOLUTIONS, AND TO DEMAND FREEDOM FOR POLITICAL PRISONERS* The governor issued an order forbidding the march, and called on the militia.

(REPORT ON IMITATION OF CAMPAIGN BY HEN. C.C. IN S.S. - C.S. - 4/11/18)

Skoglund says: "Only about a hundred people actually participated in the march in the street, but the sidewalks in the Loop area were crowded with workers. Only the militant wing, the left wingers took the street. I was one of the marchers.

"We alked from the Bridge Square district about ten blocks to Tenth St. and Marmon Place. The militia followed us., they were ordered at Marmon place to line us up against the wall with bayonets and stop any further demonstration. This is just an indication of the tempo and spirit

of the working class at that time."

Shortly after that the City Council passed an ordinance forbidding the carrying of the red or black flag, which was still on the books in the 1960's.

The element of personal continuity in the life of Skoglund and the other Minneapolis comrades played an important part in the influence they exerted on the labor movement. They maintained life long personal relations with all kinds of people, who could be helpful to them at one time or another, and who could give them a feel for developments and trends in the labor movement. *RAINBOW - 1-14-1911*

Dobbs notes this in "Temper Rebellion: " In Minneapolis there were numerous trade unionists who retained memories of radical trade unionism in the past. Some considered themselves socialist in the loose sense. Others kept alive a sense of militancy from their IWW days. Once a real strike got underway in the city, many of them could be expected to rally to the cause like old warhorses responding to the bugle."

The minutes from the Mooney Committee in 1918 can provide a concrete illustration of this. *CONTINUITY.*

Among the people attending the committee meetings in the summer and fall of 1918 are Charles Dirba, from the Latvian local of the S.P., soon to be the state secretary of the S.P. and a key figure in the S.P. Left Wing and the formation of the C.P., and later a national leader in the C.P.

Carl Sahlin, from the Scandinavian Federation, later a well known writer for the Swedish section of the C.P. in Chicago, Ole Ogg, a member of the Milk Drivers Union, affiliated with the Teamsters, who plays a role in 1934, I.G. Scott, a militant trade unionist, who is elected as a socialist alderman in the fall. Scott is a leader of the Mpls. C.L.U. in 1934, when the strikes begin, and is one of the people Farrell is talking about.

In the mid forties he ends up being Hennepin County Commissioner and gets Skoglund a job on the County Highway Dept. when he is blacklisted after he is released from Sandstone Federal Prison.

Also attending the Mooney meetings is Martin Abern, then working for the Minnesota Transfer Railway, who, as we know, is one of the founders of American Trotskyism.

As Skoglund said, the revolutionary position in the socialist movement was crystalized through the Russian Revolution. He was an enthusiastic partisan of the Russian Revolution, known by his coworkers in the Pullman yards as "The Bolshevik."

Under the impact of the Russian Revolution new recruits began to stream into the Socialist party, especially foreign born workers, augmenting further the immigrant workers who had joined the S.P. because of its opposition to World war I. inadequate as that was.

From about 75,000 members in 1918, the party's membership grew to about 110,000 by the summer of 1919, and of this total about 60,000, or over 50%, were in the language federations. For the first time in the party's history, the English speaking members were in the minority.

A Left Wing movement crystalized in the party, based on support to the Russian revolution, and the desire to form a party of the Bolshevik type, and especially in response to the call by Lenin in Jan. 1919 to form a new International.

Skoglund says: "When the Russian revolution occurred, the fight became bitter, the old traditions of politeness in public meetings, of tolerance

for other views was discarded, and a knock-down drag out fight began over support to the Revolution.

"The position against the Russian Revolution", he says, was "they opposed the dictatorship of the proletariat. The discussion was mainly on the nature of the state apparatus. The right wing claimed the outcome depended on who was elected. The left wing maintained that the old state apparatus had to be destroyed, and a new one established. The point is clear now but at that time, even among the Militants, it was not. There was almost no literature about it in general use. Not until Lenin's State and Revolution came out did the people here get a clear theoretical document on the question."

"It was over this issue that the Socialist party was split at the convention of 1919." end of quote

In Minnesota, as elsewhere, the foreign born radicals played the key role in driving this development forward.

The state executive board of the Minnesota S.P. was taken over by a left wing slate in 1919. The new state secretary was Charles Dirba, a member of the Lettish Federation of the S.P., which had several years before provided the support for the nucleus of the new Left Wing, on a national basis,

Prior to the S.P. convention in Chicago in 1919, the Left Wing constituted itself on a national basis through a national conference in New York in June. The composition was pretty much the same as what turned out to be the national leadership of the Communist party. James P. Cannon was a delegate from Kansas City.

Jack Carney, an Irish revolutionary, came from ^{Duluth,} Minnesota to represent the Scandinavian locals. The Scandinavians were always looking outward. They had established an English language socialist paper in Duluth, with Carney as editor, in order to influence English speaking workers.

The foreign born militants in general, in Minnesota, attempted not only to mobilize their own ranks in this fight, but to win over the English speaking comrades.

In the Minnesota Bulletin, the organ of the state office of the S.P., Dirba wrote, in 1919: "Comrades of the English speaking locals, why do you not pay your dues? Are you afraid to stand by the state office and the revolutionary policies it has consistently pursued for the past year?

It cannot possibly be you are aligning yourselves with the other side! "

"Come one, comrades, come on! The battles must be fought out and you cannot avoid playing your part in them. "

He mentions that only the Scandinavian federation is paying its dues directly to the state office, of the suspended foreign language federations.

The first step in the split in the S.P. in 1919 was the suspension, by the S.P. leadership, of seven foreign language federations: the Russian, Lettish, Lithuanian, Ukrainian, South Slavic and Polish, as well as several state organizations.

By July 1919, the old National Executive Board had expelled two thirds of the S.P. membership.

In Minnesota, the new left wing state executive board had been elected, including two Minneapolis City Councilmen.

The left wings slate was overwhelmingly elected by referendum vote as the Minnesota delegation to the Sept 1919 convention in Chicago.

Skoglund received the third highest vote *of the seven delegates elected.*

It was reported in the minutes of the State Executive board Aug 24 that Skoglund could not attend. This may have been because of a national rail strike which took place in the summer of 1919, in which Skoglund was

a leader.

Apparently he did end up going, since he related his experiences at the Chicago convention to Malstead in the '55 interview.

Now we come to the decisive Chicago convention of the S.P. in late August and early September of 1919 so vividly portrayed in the movie "Reds."

Skoglund describes the convention: "The party had conventions once a year.

(1917)
The prior convention had been carried by the St. Louis program, a pacifist program of refusal to support the war and instructions to all the men of draft age to refuse to register."

"The left wing, that is the section supporting the Russian Revolution, ran on a program of disaffiliation with the second international, building a Communist party, all out support for the Russian revolution, a general revolutionary policy - armed insurrection and mass action were slogans."

"The left wing carried the English speaking section in Minnesota"

Skoglund continues, " and all the language federations. They went to Chicago and were barred from entering the hall by the right wing supported by the Chicago police Dept."

C.S. 24

" Immediately the left wing delegates proceeded to organize a convention of their own, " he says, " in which a big fight occurred, and a split."

"Personally I left Chicago before the conclusion of the convention because of a general disgust with the whole situation. The issues involved in the second split appeared to me to be very impractical and not applicable for the particular period."

Some idea of what Skoglund was referring to can be gained from

James P Cannon, writing in The First Ten Years of American Communism:

"I attended the National Left Wing Conference of the Socialist Party Left Wing in New York in May 1919 as a delegate from Kansas City. I did not attend the party convention in Sept. of that year, which resulted in a split and the formation of two Communist parties.

...The Left Wing Conference was my first introduction to the New York atmosphere and my first view of the dominating role of the foreign language groups. I was in agreement with the left wing program but I was appalled by the tactical unrealism of the language-federation leaders, represented there in the first place by Hourwich (the leader of the Russian Federation.) Their manifest determination to speed up the split of the Socialist party convinced me that they weren't really living in this country and didn't know or care about the state of mind of the Socialist party membership outside New York at that time.

I was afraid that a premature split would run far ahead of the readiness of the rank and file in many sections of the country. For that reason I was opposed to any procedure that might precipitate it. Reed, Gitlow, etc.

who I first met at this conference, impressed me as far more realistic, they were also much more informed and concerned about the industrial labor movement, which was my major interest.

Cannon -2

" I identified myself with their group, which later emerged as the Communist Labor party."

..."The ~~precipitate~~ precipitate split cut the left wing off from thousands of radical socialists who were revolutionary in their sentiments but not yet ready to follow the left wing in a split.

..."The Communist party was born in Chicago as a result of an unnecessary or at any rate premature Caesarian operation which weakened and nearly killed the child at birth. "

The Chicago convention is described in the Minnesota Bulletin in an article "To the Comrades of Minnesota" written by Martin Abern.

Abern says: "The call of the Third International has been answered and the challenge of the class-conscious workers of America hurled into the teeth of the capitalist oppressors, when 128 delegates representing 58,000 comrades from all sections of the country assembled in Chicago on Sept. 1st and formed the COMMUNIST PARTY OF AMERICA."

"Your instructions to the Minnesota delegates to work for the unity of all revolutionary elements, to go to the Communist convention when it became evident the S.P. could not be captured for revolutionary socialism were faithfully carried out by delegates Comrades Dirba, Holm, Broms, and Ungar. Delegates Carney and Haglund betrayed the Minnesota comrades when they joined a disgruntled, office seeking few in the organization of a Communist Labor Party"

The left wing in Minnesota then proceeded to call a state convention of the S.P. to discuss affiliation with the Communist party on Oct 5th.

After debate over the C.P. versus the C.L.P., the convention voted to affiliate as the Minnesota Communist party.

About a week later, the Socialist party of Minneapolis met at a city convention which Skoglund chaired and voted to endorse the decision of the state convention and affiliate with the C.P.

In the summer of 1919 the railroad shopmen carried out an "illegal" strike, against the wishes of the leaderships of the various railroad craft unions. 1919 was the high point of American labor struggles until the great battles of the 1930's.

The shopmen went on strike to prevent the railroad owners from imposing a wage cut after the roads were turned back over to private ownership by the government following the end of the war.

The strike on the railroads lasted 11 days, and won its demands.

Skoglund says that in order to bring other unions into support of the strike an organization called the Twin Cities Railroad Council was set up to which all other non-striking railroad union elected delegates.

The organization was conceived of not only as a strike support committee, but as one that could become a permanent organization that could begin to overcome the craft divisions among rail unions.

Most of the meetings were attended by between 200 and 500 delegates.

The IWW was mainly responsible for the leadership of the strike and consequently was prominent in the council.

"The policy of the IWW" Skoglund says, " was to take the council over, not only ideologically, but physically by bringing the council into the IWW. In two or three meetings the entire time was taken up with discussion of the preamble of the IWW constitution, whether or not to adopt it and make the council a branch of the IWW."

"As was to be expected," he says, " in the debate a big opposition developed to this policy, led by C.R. Medlund, who was a representative of the engineers."

C.R. Medlund and his brother became members of the C.P., and then in 1928 were expelled from the C.P. in Minneapolis along with other pioneers of our party.

Medlund's position was that it was impossible to bring all the unions and membership into the organization on such grounds, that the problem was building a united front around the question of uniting all the crafts.

Eventually the IWW ended up capturing the council, but they really only captured themselves. The only thing left in the council was about 15 workers, all members of the IWW.

The two new Communist parties formed in Sept 1919 were immediately hit with government raids on their headquarters, seizing their records and files, preparatory to the Palmer raids which took place midnight, January 2nd, 1920, when thousands of radical immigrant workers were rounded up and deported.

Skoglund was not home that night, and the raiders missed him.

We have a list of the C.P.ers arrested in the Palmer raids in St. Paul which gives a good idea of the composition of the party at that time.

They list : 19 Russians, 7 Finns, 3 Austrians (actually Slavs under the Austrian empire) 2 Canadians, 2 Swedes, 1 German and 1 Rumanian - Martin Abern.

Skoglund turned himself in voluntarily a few days later. A letter from Agent Kearney of the Bureau of Investigation reports, "Carl Skoglund came personally to the office and stated that he had heard that government officers had been to his room the night of Jan 2 asking for him."

In this interview Skoglund demonstrated that by this time he had learned that it wasn't always necessary to tell the truth to the government witch hunters.

They asked him if it was true that he had chaired the meeting of the Mpls. S.P. that had voted to affiliate with the C.P. and if it was true that he had made the motion. He had to answer yes to this, since he knew they already had the minutes of the meeting.

He then told them that although he had done that, he really didn't want to join the Communist party because he didn't want to work against the government, and in fact he had never gone to another meeting after the city convention. In other words, he only told them what they already knew. *From the minutes.*

Two months later, a letter to the St. Paul Bureau agent arrived from Washington wanting to know whatever happened to Skoglund, along with 16 others, including Abern. They had all been released on bond, he reported. So Skoglund stayed in the United States, and sidestepped the deportation machine for the first time. As it turned out, he did attend a few more meetings of the Communist Party.

Under the impact of the government repression, the dues paying membership of the C.P. was reduced to about 10,000. The initial membership of the C.P. was overwhelmingly Eastern European - 75 %

Twenty five percent were Russian workers, and only about 7% were English speaking.

The composition changed in the next few years, as tremendous numbers of East Europeans went to Russia. By 1922 the party composition had stabilized with about 45- 50% of the members belonging to the Finnish Federation, and 30% in the Eastern European language federation, 10% in the English speaking branches and 8% in the Jewish Federation.

The C.P. was a working class organization, its foreign born members reflected the composition of the American working class in the '20's. At that time 67% of the oil workers, 67 % of the packinghouse workers, 61 % of the miners were foreign born, with similar proportions in other basic industry.

It wasn't until the thirties that the C.P. began to recruit large numbers of English speaking, native members.

The party in Minnesota at the beginning of the twenties had around 1,000 members. District 9, which was Minnesota, was the third largest membership district. The absolute majority were in the Finnish Federation and many were farmers, primarily interested in activity in their co-operatives .

In 1929 the party in Minnesota had 850 members. 250 were industrial workers, 150 were farmers, and 250 were listed as "housewives."

The C.P. and the C.L.P. existed as separate parties until May 1920 when the C.L.P. and a group that had split off from the Russian Federation dominated C.P. led by Charles Ruthenberg came together and formed the United Communist party. A year later the rest of the original C.P. came, in May 1921, and all the American Communists were united in one party.

Ray Dunne and Carl Skoglund were both elected to the District Committee of the C.P. and served on it until their expulsion in 1928.

Due to the repression of the government raids and the deportations, and the sectarianism of the leaders of the Russian federation, a large part of the C.P. leadership had come up with the idea that a truly rev-

olutionary party in the U.S. had to be an u mderground, illegal party.

Anything less would be a consession to capitalist legality.

This utterly fantastic idea reflected the isolation of the party and especially its Russian Federation leaders from the mainstream of American life, and the real attitudes of American workers.

Cannon, who was by this time a resident member of the Central Committee in New York, said, "I soon became convinced that the party could not survive in a completely underground existence where we were cut off from the labor movement and the real life of the country in general."

The fight for a legal party was carried all the way to the Comintern before it was settled.

> **QUOTE FROM CLAUDE MCKAY**

Around this fight coalesced the forces that fought for "Americanizing" the party in the sense of turning its face toward the mainstream of American workers, and developing an indigenous, native born leadership.

f The Comintern leadership described this process from its point of view in an open letter to the C.P.'s 6th Convention: "The Workers (Communist Party) has been for many years an organization of foreign born workers not much connected with the political life of the country. Owing to this

in American politics—a highly organized all-Negro group. When you have that—a Negro group voting together like these Finns and Russians—you will be getting somewhere. We may feel inflated as *individual* Negroes sitting in on the councils of the whites, but it means very little if our people are not organized. Otherwise the whites will want to tell us what is right for our people even against our better thinking. The Republicans and the Democrats do the same thing. They give a few plum places to leading Negroes as representatives of the race and our people applaud vicariously. But we remain politically unorganized. What we need is our own group, organized and officered entirely by Negroes, something similar to the Finnish Federation. Then when you have your own group, your own voting strength, you can make demands on the whites; they will have more respect for your united strength than for your potential strength. Every other racial group in America is organized as a group, except Negroes. I am not an organizer or an agitator, but I can see what is lacking in the Negro-group."

I listened to James Cannon's fighting speeches for a legal Communist party in America. Cannon's manner was different from Bill Haywood's or Foster's. He had all the magnetism, the shrewdness, the punch, the bag of tricks of the typical American politician, but here he used them in a radical way. I wondered about him. If he had entered Democratic or Republican politics, there was no barrier I could see that could stop him from punching his way straight through to the front ranks.

I think Trotsky was the first of the big Russians to be convinced that there should be a legal Communist party in America, then Rakovsky and finally Zinoviev, a little reluc-

tantly. Bukharin was for the illegal group. He said: "Remember what Jack London has told us about the terror and secret organization in America in his *Iron Heel*." That was so rare that I had to smile. While Cannon was informing the Russians about actual conditions in America, Bukharin was visualizing the America of Jack London's *Iron Heel*. Bukharin always did make me think of that line about some men having greatness thrust upon them. I believe that Lenin said of Bukharin, as Frank Harris said of H. G. Wells, that he could not think. Yet Bukharin was the author of the A B C of Communism, which once had a big vogue among the radicals.

At last even I was asked my opinion of an illegal Communist party in America. I tried to get excused, saying that as I was not an official delegate or a politician, but merely a poet, I didn't think my opinion was worth while. But as my colleague the mulatto was for the illegal party, I suppose they needed a foil. So then I said that although I had no experience of the actual conditions of social life in Czarist Russia, I believed there was no comparison between them and American conditions today. There were certain democratic privileges such as a limited freedom of the press and a limited right of free speech that our governing classes had had to concede because they were the necessary ingredients of their own system of society. And American radicals could generally carry on open propaganda under those democratic privileges. Our Upton Sinclairs, Eugene Debs's, Max Eastmans and Mother Jones's might be prosecuted and imprisoned for a specific offense against the law, but they were not banished for their radical ideas to an American Siberia. And I said I thought that the only place where illegal and

"immigrant exclusiveness two leading groups arose, took shape and became consolidated with in the party."

The faction from which most of our original cadre came from was initially known as the Foster Cannon faction, led by Cannon and Wm Z. Foster.

In 1921 a convention was called to organize the Workers Party of America. James P. Cannon was selected as the National Chairman of the party, the legal expression of the still underground C.P.

Cannon said he was " sort of a symbol of the Western- American orientation it was deemed necessary to symbolize."

Parallel developments took place within the Scandinavian socialist movement in the U.S. In 1919 the majority of the S.S.F. voted to form an independent federation oriented toward the Third International. In 1922 they merged with a left-ward moving split off from the SLP's Swedish section. Svenska Socialisten's name was changed to "Ny Tid, the "New Age".

An FBI report dated Feb 13, 1924, reports that Carl Skoglund is the District Organizer for District 9 of the U.S.S.F., which includes Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota Iowa and Northern Michigan."

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This did not require a great deal of sleuthing on their part, since this information was published every week in the directory in Ny Tid.

Skoglund was also on the national steering committee of the Federation.

Skoglund also contributed to Ny Tid. The earliest contribution is a report.

MAR 10, 1922

from Detroit, where he had gone to attend a meeting of the Swedish Central Committee. During their meeting they arranged a public meeting on the famine in Russia. He says they asked the Swedish consul in the area to speak, and his name was printed on the program, but he failed to appear. "But you see, " he says, " a GOOD patriot should not help parties which are used to help starving Bolsheviks, and therefor we had to draw a black line through his name. But the results were good anyway."

The U.S.S.F. seems to have been much smaller than the S.S.F. , apparently around a few hundred. One reason for this may be that the Swedes were becoming assimilated into the U.S. and participating more in English speaking organizations.

Skoglund participated in the U.S.S.F . reight up to the expulsion from the C.P. in 1928. In fact there is a letter in the files of the S.S.F. in Sweden (what remains of them) written in 1931 from one of the Stalinist members of the Federation to their National Office compaining because the Mpls Scandinavian branch had invited Skoglund to speak. He wanted to know how to stop it. So did the national leaders, but they couldn't find a way to do it.

One of the central leaders of the Scandinavian Federation was Arne Swabeck, a founder of our movement. Although Swabeck was Danish, he had a big role in the mostly Swedish federation, as well as being an important national leader of the C.P.

In 1925 the C.P. went through what was called the "Bolshevization" campaign, initiated by the Comintern. It was an attempt to carry out a forced march to allegedly "Bolshevik" standards of organization through arbitrary and sweeping organizational measures. One aspect of the Bolshevization campaign was the formal liquidation of all the language federations. This was supposed to solve the problem of the C.P. being an essentially federated party, made up of a score of language federations, and convert it overnight into a centralized "Bolshevik" model.

In reality the language federations went on much as before, with their fraternal halls, social affairs, and national newspapers. They just changed their names. The U.S.S.F. became the Swedish Workers Educational Society. But this way the leaders could report to the Comintern that the task had been carried out.

This kind of cynical doubletalk became more and more institutionalized in the C.P., and prepared the ground for the purging of all dissent and factions from the party on orders of the Comintern and Stalin at the end of the twenties.

Apparently Skoglund had some problem's with the Bolshevization campaign, since he says in the Halstead interview he was brought up on charges by Clarence Hathaway for not carrying out the Bolshevization program. But he was acquitted by the District committee after a fight lead by Ray Dunne.

Skoglund stopped writing for the paper after 1925 - we don't know why - but there are several extremely interesting analytical articles on the Minn. Federation of Labor, the Farmer Labor party and the Mpls. Trades and Labor Assembly ^{in the middle 20's}. Some of this will be related later .

Skoglund was elected a delegate to the illegal C.P. convention held in Bridgeman Michigan in August 1922.

The issue at the convention, he said, was whether the illegal party would be liquidated and a legal organization formed. He was for the legal party, and was known as a "liquidator."

Then it was discovered the convention was about to be raided. A decision was made to adjourn the convention, and Skoglund and another delegate were assigned to dig a hole and bury the documents, typewriters briefcases, and so on.

The other delegate turned out to be an FBI agent. After the convention he was sent around the country to try to finger the delegates he had met, who had all used false names. Skoglund had to stay away from party meetings and more or less lay low for six months.

In July 1922 a national rail strike was called by the 6 shopcraft unions to fight a wage cut.

A strike committee was established to represent all the shopworkers in the Twin Cities on the Pullman, CGW, Omaha and Burlington RRs. Skoglund was chairman of the strike committee and Oscar Coover was the secretary.

This form - the strike committee- based more directly on the rank and file than the elected officials - is in essence the same as the strike committee that was established in 1934 to out flank the conservative incumbents in ^{old} Teamsters 574 on the Executive Board . Almost every tactic employed in the 34 strikes had been tested out in previous experiences by Skoglund and the other comrades, This was one of them.

The Harding administration immediately intervened in the shopmen's strike and obtained an injunction limiting pickets to two per gate.

Handcuffed by the injunction and unable to organize effective picketing, operating under circumstances that were more unfavorable than in 1919, the shop workers were slowly ground down, as the railroads mobilized thousands of scabs to break the strike and the unions. Meanwhile the official leadership vacillated and the strike was crushed.

The AFL leadership signed a separate agreement with the B & O RR and strike solidarity was shattered. It became necessary to sign a separate contract with each railroad. As a result of this betrayal the railroads were able to establish company unions and the workers were gravely set back.

Skoglund says : "The Great Western, where Oscar Coover worked, signed the B & O agreement, which provided for the strikers to go back to work according to seniority as vacancies occurred. That meant that the scabs that the company had hired during the strike had first seniority.

"Then we decided to create vacancies so that all could go back to work, (an announcement was made that the union was going to clean out the scabs on a certain day. Most of them cleared out as soon as they heard about it) and all did go back, except Oscar Coover, and Harrington, a boilermaker, whom the foreman of the yard said would never come back to work as long as he was there. "

" A committee was set up of which I was spokesman, to enforce the contract and put Oscar Coover and Harrington back to work. "

They met with the bosses and let them know that if the two were not put back to work within twelve hours there would be another strike. The next morning they were back working.

Skoglund, who had donated a thousand dollars of his savings to the strike, never got back to work, and was blacklisted from the railroads

and from his trade. *But until 1925 he continued to represent RCA local 299 in the Mpls Trades & Labor Assembly.*

All during this period of the early twenties, the Minneapolis Trades and Labor Assembly continued under left wing leadership.

Although the socialists in the Ass'y had split in 1919 over whether to stay in the S.P. or go with the C.P., the full significance of the split did not become apparent until late 1924.

The Assembly continued to coast along on the momentum generated by the post war labor upsurge. They sent a delegate to the Congress of Red Trade unions in Moscow. They were frequent sponsors of meetings for Wm. Z. Foster, Bill Dunne, and other radicals.

The secretary of the Ass'y, Dan Stevens, a longtime member of the painters union, was a member of the C.P., as were several of the full time organizers. The party's HQ in Mpls. was in the Labor Temple.

Many of the delegates to the Ass'y were members of the Communist party, including Skoglund, Ray Dunne, Oscar Coover, Clarence Mathaway.

Close to twenty. *Many future Trotskyists.*

This state of affairs was unacceptable to the bosses and the conservative head of the AFL, Samuel Gompers.

Gompers sent in his representative Paul Smith, to straighten the Ass'y out, in 1922. By 1924 the pressure was stepped up, as the anti red drive rode through the AFL.

Local unions began to withdraw from the Ass'y, especially the construction trades, putting great pressure on the centrists.

"Left wing" Campaign "My Tied"

In Feb. 1925 the Ass'y buckled under the pressure and voted in successive steps, to bar members of the Workers Party from holding office in the Ass'y and then to bar them from even being delegates. This resulted in the expulsion of close to 20 Communists and militant unionists.

At this point the full significance of the split that had taken place in 1919 became evident as the "yellow" socialists, as they were called by the reds, capitulated all down the line.

Ten years later, after the Teamster's strikes, these same people were forced to take Skoglund, Dunne and others back in, and then when the relationship of forces shifted again in 1941, threw them out again.

In order to demonstrate the irrevocable break that had been made, and in order to show their loyalty to the class collaborationist AFL leadership

that they had formerly professed to despise, they changed the name of the Ass'y to the Minneapolis Central Labor Union Council, with a new anti-communist constitution.

Although Skoglund had been blacklisted from the railroad in 1922 he had continued to represent Garmen's local 299 in the Ass'y.

In 1925 the Foster Cannon faction won the majority of the delegates to the C.P. convention and was preparing to elect a national leadership reflecting this, when a telegram arrived from Moscow instructing the convention to elect a leadership split 50 - 50 between the two factions, with the Comintern representative given decisive vote,. Since the Comintern was backing the C.P. minority faction, the Ruthenberg- Lovestone group, this in effect expropriated the party memberships right to elect its own leadership.

Skoglund says: "All the rank and file delegates felt there was something wrong when the people in the country had nothing to say as to the policy or leadership of their organization."

He says: "Ray Dunne and I, riding back on the train, discussed the situation. We both agreed something was wrong, but we could not explain it."

"After the adjournment of the convention, in fact from the beginning of 1925, " Skoglund says, "big campaigns had gone around the party against "Trotskyism." At none of these meetings was any documents presented except the official documents and dictates from the National Committee.

Skoglund continues: "After hours of speaking and denunciation of Trotskyism as counter-revolutionary and a betrayal of the working class, a vote was taken. Rules for voting were laid down. Everyone that voted yes on the international policy was O.K. and those that abstained from voting were to be investigated, and those that voted no were to be expelled."

He says: "At the last meeting of that kind that I attended, I was sitting in the corner of the hall, reading an article in the Nation. The article was explaining what 'Trotskyism' was from a point of view sympathetic to Trotsky. The district organizer noticed me reading the article. He made a speech on the floor against me, saying that I had Trotskyist sympathies and that I should be disciplined. That was around 1927."

Around 1926 Skoglund was appointed trade union organizer for the Minnesota District of the C.P. The District Committee had discussions about how to break the grip of the Citizens Alliance.

One of the upholstery unions in the city went on strike. It had about two to three hundred workers. Skoglund says: "I was instructed to participate in the form of advice through our contacts in the plant."

" It was recognized that this strike would not be a test of strength between the union and the employers' organization and that most likely it would end in defeat. But we applied a policy more or less as a test.

the
When we came into a situation we participated in a big group of strikers mostly non members of the C.P. We analyzed the situation and pointed out that any possibility of winning the strike depended on applying the following policy: 1. First setting up a strike headquarters close to the plant 2. Equipping that headquarters with kitchen facilities. 3. Setting up a well organized picket arrangement 4. Starting immediately to mobilize the labor movement in support of the strike in the form of financial aid and a general appeal to workers everywhere for donations 5. That the union take responsibility for caring for anyone that got injured on picket duty. "

This, of course, is the same policy that was put into motion 8 years later under more favorable conditions in the '34 truckdrivers strike s.

Another assignment Skoglund was given by the C.P. was to be the party adviser to the Young Communist League.

The Labor Lyceum was a meeting hall and library used by workers, especially Jewish workers belonging to both the C.P. and the S.P., on the North Side of Minneapolis.

In 1924 a 14 year old girl named Fannie Barach met Skoglund there. She was reading "Capital" because she wanted to find out why some people had so much and others had nothing.

While she was struggling with this Carl Skoglund came in and asked her what she was reading. He suggested she start with something a little easier to digest and gave her a couple pamphlets, "Wage Labor and Capital" and "Theories of Surplus Value". He must have given away a lot of copies. Many people tell essentially the same story.

Fannie became a member of the YCL at age 15. She said Skoglund wasn't too comfortable with the idea of being the overseer of the youth group. He thought they ought to make their own decisions.

Fannie became one of the founding members of the American Trotskyist movement in 1928, when she got up in the YCL and demanded to know why Ray and Carl and the other comrades had been expelled, and was expelled herself.

Skoglund says : " We became very suspicious about the situation in the C.P. After the 6th World Congress held in Moscow, Wm. Z. Foster arrived back in the U.S. before the other delegates and was sent on a national tour. No meeting was arranged in the Twin Cities. He came through on a train on the way out west. Ray Dunne and I decided to go to St. Paul and buy a ticket and ride with him to Minneapolis, about a ten minute ride, for the purpose of finding out what went on at the Congress. He volunteered the information that Trotsky had submitted an oppositional these to the so- called majority thesis submitted by the Stalin leadership. Foster also said the Trotsky document contained some very valid criticisms, but due to fear he didn't express himself any further. That was the last official contact we had with the national leadership of the C.P. as such."

"Ray and I discussed it. It didn't sound right. We had read a book written in England by a Stalinist on Trotskyism. Just from reading the book it could be seen it was distorted all out of proportion. That made us suspicious also. Ray and I, who were very intimate, discussed the internal situation. I was proposing to him that we make a break from the C.P. He wanted to wait and see. He thought it was premature."

Shortly after that James P Cannon arrived back in the U.S. from the Congress. He submitted a resolution to the National Committee signed by him, Max Schactman and Martin Abern announcing their support for the Trsotsky program. They were immediately expelled.

Members of the District Committee in Minnesota were called together to endorse the decision of the N.C.

Skoglund says, "We introduced a resolution signed by myself, Ray Dunne Oscar Coover, O.R. Votaw and William Watkins, all members of the D.C., demanding that Cannon and the others be given hearings before any expulsion become effective."

"A counter motion by the District Organizer was made that the signers of the motion be immediately expelled. It carried by a slim majority."

A couple of days later a membership meeting was called and the two resolutions introduced. Everybody who voted against the majority resolution was expelled.

Skoglund said : "To me, personally, this expulsion felt like a big load off my back. During the couple or three years before we were expelled it became impossible for the party to do any constructive work. All activities consisted primarily of terrific internal struggles and it was very apparent

that a general degeneration had set in. "

Soon after the expulsion, Fannie says, Carl and Ray took her down to the C.P. headquarters about midnight. They boosted her up, she climbed through the transom into the office and got the mailing list.

Immediately after the expulsion Skoglund joined the general drivers union 574 as a result of a discussion in the Communist League of America branch - the name the Tretskyists took. In 1928 Skoglund, Ray Dunne and Martin Söderberg, another veteran of the S.S.F. bought five trucks, with which they hauled coal.

They chose the trucking industry, he said, because it was analyzed as the most favorable one for breaking the open shop hold of the Citizen's Alliance.

Skoglund tells a story about being approached in 1930 by Walter Frank, a building trades business agent, whom he describes as a "typical centrist". Frank was another Swedish socialist. He had backed the C.P.ers when they were expelled from the Trades and Labor Assembly in 1924.

He came to Skoglund and Ray Dunne for advice on what could be done to get the building trades organized more effectively.

letters, Militant, Dec. 14, 1929

Moving Ahead in Minneapolis

Minneapolis, Minn.

Dear Comrades:

The League in Minneapolis is carrying on real good work, which will bring in many ^{new} members from among the American workers. We are about to start a campaign to organize the general drivers into unions. We have very good connections in this particular industry. We are also carrying on work among the cab drivers with good results. A Left Wing has been developed in the Amalgamated which meets regularly and has excellent connections.

The defense movement is going on fairly good with prospects of more mass support in the future.

Two classes have been organized by the League--one in the A.B.C. of Communism and the other on American labor history.

The Party is back in its underground days and is issuing manifestos and leaflets like then, only this time they are not numbered. The last one was about us "splitting" the labor defense when we tried to work with them and were expelled. I am called traitor, renegade and accused of making alliances with S.P., City Hall prosecutors, and A.F. of L. labor fakers. These leaflets are doing the Communist movement untold harm and the workers class the members of the Party as a bunch of crazy people. It will take years to live down these blunders.

Yours for Communism,

CARL SKOGLUND

They worked with him and eventually an organizing meeting was called with thousands of workers in attendance. No definite steps were taken except to carry out general propaganda in favor of organization, so it did not really succeed in its objectives. But Skoglund said he told the story to show that during this period, the "dog days" of American Trotskyism, they were not completely isolated.

About this time, he says, Bill Brown, the president of 574, approached them and asked them to support him and offered to push their policies.

That is, the plan to organize the truck drivers. It is clear that the plan had been laid out years in advance of when it actually took place and drew upon the decades of experiences the comrades had, as has been shown, and the network of contacts they had in political and labor circles.

Skoglund was the central strategist of the Minneapolis strikes.

The story of the Teamster years can't be taken up here, and comrades are referred to Farrell Dobbs' 4 volume Teamster series.

Skoglund's contributions from 1934 are much better documented, and of course these years are the outstanding period of his life, when a revolutionary strategy was able to be put into action in the labor movement, and when many new recruits to the revolutionary socialist movement were able to be assembled.

This presentation could not be a complete account of Skoglund's life. We wanted to present newly discovered facts on his life, and to begin to place him more in the center of the development of our movement.

Carl Skoglund was a leader of the working class in tremendous battles

and a member of a persecuted minorities at various times in his life.

But his fundamental goal was always consistent, to do whatever he could

to educate and mobilize the working class in the fight for a socialist

world. In doing this he made a tremendous impact on people he met and worked

with, and this has persisted in the 22 years since his death. So Carl

Skoglund is the real organizer and originator of these presentations today;

he did a lot of the talking here, and we feel that his exemplary record

as a Bolshevik worker deserves to be brought to the attention of the party,

and will, in itself, contribute to the further development of the party.

George Breitman will take it from here.

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SUGGESTED PARTIAL READING LIST ABOUT CARL SKOGLUND
to supplement August 1982 talk about him at Oberlin

"Carl Skoglund," an obituary by Farrell Dobbs
The Militant, Dec. 19, 1960

Teamster Rebellion four-volume series by Farrell Dobbs
Teamster Power (see indexes of each volume for
Teamster Politics references to Skoglund)
Teamster Bureaucracy

"The Man Who Had No Papers," by James P. Cannon
on Skoglund's 70th birthday in 1954
Speeches for Socialism, p. 321

"Speech at Skoglund Memorial Meeting," by James P. Cannon
on how Skoglund died
Speeches for Socialism, p. 324

American City by Charles Sumford Walker (1937)
(especially pp. 30-32, 88-89, 108)

FOR GENERAL BACKGROUND READING:

The History of American Trotskyism by James P. Cannon (1944)

The First Ten Years of American Communism by James P. Cannon (1962)

The Roots of American Communism by Theodore Draper (1957)

American Communism and Soviet Russia by Theodore Draper (1960)

The Socialist Party of America by David A. Shannon (1955)

The American Socialist Movement, 1897-1912 by Ira Kipnis (1952)